



The Inter-American Foundation and Disabled Peoples' Organizations

No. 24

The Inter-American Foundation (IAF) is a U.S. government agency that provides grants directly to nongovernmental and grassroots organizations in Latin America and the Caribbean for innovative self-help programs. The IAF responds to proposals designed to improve the social, cultural and economic well-being of families, communities and societies.

For more than three decades the IAF has helped marginalized communities overcome biases and achieve full participation in economic and civic life. Among the IAF's grantees are groups working to empower individuals with disabilities. While the disabled often constitute an invisible minority in Latin America and reliable statistics on this community are nonexistent, we know that many live below the poverty line. The Inter-American Foundation has supported projects designed and managed by a variety of Disabled Peoples Organization (DPOs) that focus on prevention, education, rehabilitation and job development. The following are representative of organizations the IAF has funded over the years:

Asociación Cooperativa de Producción Artesanal Santa Lucia de R.L. (ACOPASANTAL), a cooperative enterprise of blind workers in San Salvador, El Salvador, received US\$101,100 from the IAF from 1990 to 2001. With this grant ACOPASANTAL expanded its production beyond mattresses to include vinyl and leather finished goods, as well as furniture, table cloths, bed spreads and other items. Diversification allowed the organization to cope with market changes caused by globalization and to pay 20 visually-impaired workers a steady income.

Centro Alternativo Experimental del Sordo (CAES), a Dominican Republic nonprofit located in San Pedro de Macoris, received US\$31,000 between 1994 and 1996 from the IAF to provide vocational training in candle-making, sewing and woodworking to 80 hearing-impaired youths, half of whom also received

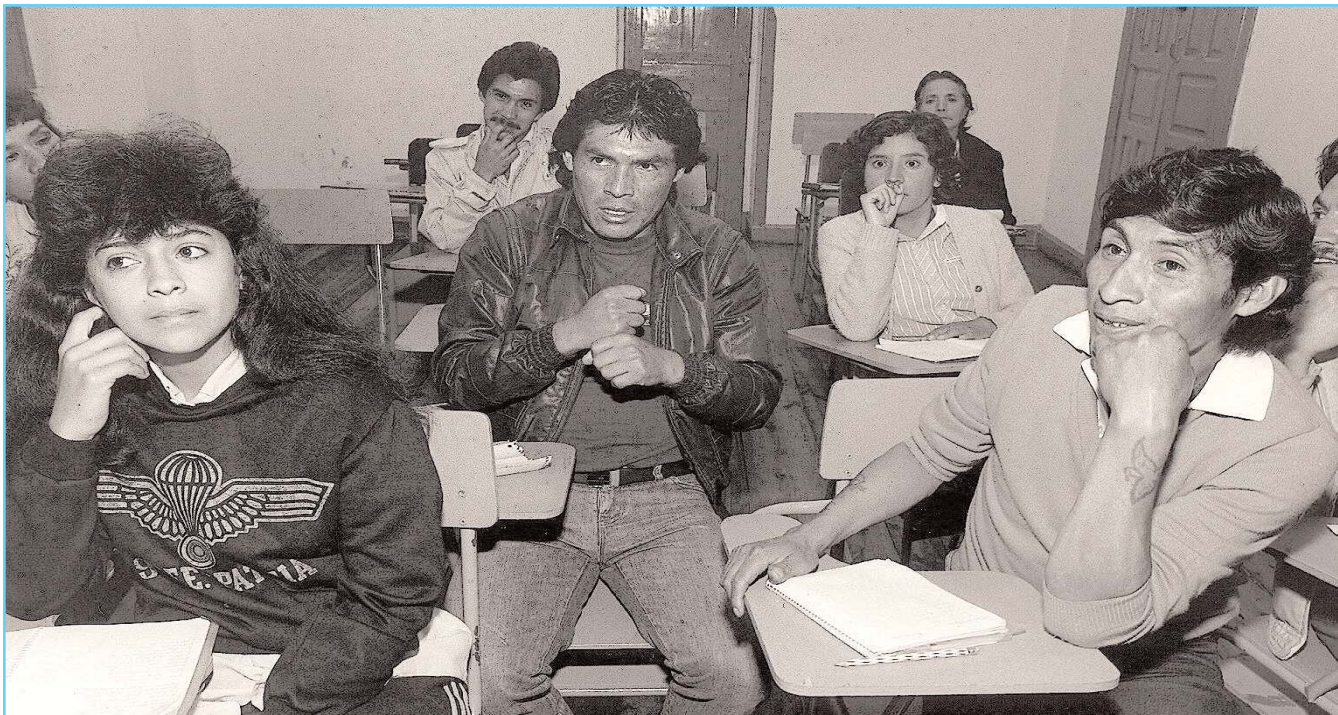


Courtesy: SASE, Lima, Peru

Victor Huamancusi Quispe of Ayacucho, Peru, is a beneficiary of the FUNDADES project. Quispe produces orthopedic devices in his workshop where he employs several handicapped workers.

literacy training. CAES placed the trained workers in jobs at local assembly and clothing plants or helped them establish their own microenterprises.

Fundación para el Desarrollo Solidario (FUNDADES), a Peruvian organization, used US\$230,000 from the IAF to establish a training center for handicapped adults in the municipality of Villa El Salvador. Between 1998 and 2001 some 600 individuals were trained in marketing, accounting and enterprise development. Approximately 700 small business loans were awarded to the disabled.



Miguel Sayago

Adult students were among the beneficiaries of 1983 IAF grantee Sociedad de Sordos Adultos in Quito. The Ecuadorians above are learning sign language.

The *Centro de Formación Popular "Renaciendo Juntos"* (CEPOREJUN), a Venezuelan NGO, initiated an innovative job training and enterprise development program by establishing a school to train 550 unemployed or low-income people living with HIV/AIDS in the state of Nueva Esparta. IAF's commitment of US\$258,530 between 1998 and 2003 supports training in trades, business management, the job search and interview, and communication. CEPOREJUN partners with local businesses to place graduates of its program, confronts the stigma associated with employing a worker with HIV/AIDS and educates business leaders on the rights as well as the capabilities of this population.

Promotora para la Organización de los Discapacitados de El Salvador (PODES), an association for handicapped Salvadorans, established regional service centers, including a mobile unit, to assist low-income individuals who require the use of prosthetic limbs. With IAF support totaling US\$115,000 between 1994 and 1997, PODES provided approximately 950 individuals with maintenance, parts and/or new devices. During the project, PODES began to manufacture many of its prosthetics from raw materi-

als found in El Salvador, thereby reducing imports and costs. Additionally, the organization expanded its focus from veterans of the armed conflict to the entire Salvadoran amputee population.

Currently the IAF is working to expand its support of DPOs and their initiatives. In this connection, the IAF is surveying its projects without a disability focus to determine the participation of the handicapped in all phases of project activities.

For additional information about IAF grants and publications, you are invited to visit our Web site at www.iaf.gov.

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